

BULLETIN

Chainsaw safety

This information bulletin has been prepared in regard to avoiding potential injuries and hazards when using chainsaws. Chainsaws are used extensively, not only in the traditional areas of forest work, but also in public arenas, private industry and on the farm and in the home.

Personal protective clothing for chainsaw users

A chainsaw operator must not only ensure that the machine is in safe operating condition, but must also wear protective clothing for optimum protection.

- Head protection (hard hat). A hard hat should be worn at all times as protection from falling material, and to reduce injuries from kickback.
- Ear protection (ear muffs/ear plugs). All operators and assistants should wear suitable ear protection. Chainsaws operate in the region of 100-220dB (A) at the operators ear, therefore careful consideration must be given to the attenuation of the ear protector.
- Eye protection (goggles/glasses/mesh and perspex screens). The chain on the saw rotates at more than 40 km/h, so chips and material can be flung at the operators eyes at very high speed.
- Leg Protection (trousers/chaps). Leg protectors in a variety of kevlar and nylons are not effective in preventing cuts to the operators legs – a common problem.
- Foot protection (safety boots). These should have steel toe caps, non-slip deep tread soles or have metal springs or cleats, to protect toes from saw cuts and feet from falling material.
- Hand protection (gloves/mittens). As well as protecting hands from cuts, abrasions, etc they prevent vibration induced problems such as Raynaud's Disease.

Kickback

Other than the obvious risk of physical contact with a moving chain, the single most dangerous aspect of the chainsaw is 'kickback'. This occurs when the bar nose contacts an object, resulting in an instantaneous kick reaction. Severe injuries and sometimes death can result.

Preventing kickback

To prevent a chainsaw kickback from occurring:

- avoid using the bar nose. Always be alert to anything coming into contact with it;
- ensure that safety chain is used, and that it is correctly sharpened and tensioned;
- always operate with two hands on the saw handles, with the thumb of the left hand placed under the front handle;
- avoid the use of the saw above the shoulders and always keep the saw in front of the body;
- before attempting to do anything with the chainsaw, read the manual;

- ensure that all safety features are fitted and operational before starting to saw, that all nuts, covers etc are secure;
- when crosscutting or pruning, check if any branches are under tension before cutting;
- seek advice and or training in the use of the chainsaw – many accidents are the result of ignorance;
- always wear the recommended protective clothing;
- ensure muffler is in good condition and fitted with a spark arrester screen;
- keep muffler clean of carbon buildup and deposit;
- ensure that the saw is correctly tuned; and
- do not spill fuel over saw when refuelling.

For further information please contact NT WorkSafe on 1800 019 115 or go to worksafe.nt.gov.au